

The INTERVIEW WITH DONALD HANKLA
BY JERRY GROVER, SEPTEMBER 1, 2001

MR. GROVER: Good Morning, this is Jerry Grover. I am interviewing Don Hankla for the oral history project. Don, what is your full name?

MR. HANKLA: My name is Donald J. Hankla

MR. GROVER: Where were you born?

MR. HANKLA: I was born in Jonesboro, Illinois. In Union County which is in the very southern tip of the state. I went to school at Anna-Jonesboro High School and Southern Illinois University where I obtained Bachelors degree with a major in botany. I also got a Masters degree. I had to major in botany and also in zoology in order to be qualified. My masters dealt with study of wetlands around Crab Orchard Lake National Wildlife Refuge. I mapped the entire wetland area around the lake. I also identified the plants and collected waterfowl. I collected the waterfowl to see what use was being made of those plants. It was a two-year study, and my wife and I had a lot of fun. I was the first student at Southern Illinois University to get a Masters degree in Wildlife Management.

MR. GROVER: Did you meet your wife down there?

MR. HANKLA: No. My wife and I met in High School. She was from the little town of Anna, and I was from the next town Jonesboro.

MR. GROVER: What was her name?

MR. HANKLA: Millicent Casper. We were married just before I came out of the Service. I was in the Air Force between High School and going to college. She was already a budding young sophomore when I got back there. I missed a year. We worked our way through college together. She got a Masters degree, and I got one also at SIU.

MR. GROVER: Lets start again from where you had finished up, at Southern Illinois.

MR. HANKLA: I had finished the research for my masters, but had not written the thesis. Millie and I had decided to try to get a temporary job while we wrote our theses. She had done the same as I had, finished her research, but had written the thesis yet. We wrote to a number of states asking if they had employment. New Hampshire fired right back and said they had a job that they would like for me to take. It would last three to four months. And while New Hampshire is a long way from southern Illinois, I thought that it would be a good opportunity to get some different experience. We accepted that job, and drove to New Hampshire. We began work just as soon as we got there. I was assigned to evaluate a watershed where the Corps of Engineers had planned to develop a reservoir. I evaluated the wildlife benefits before the dam and lake were to be built. I also had to decide what would be lost. I spent the summer evaluating the Black River watershed, near Concord, New Hampshire. On weekends we were assigned to conduct a

fishery survey on all of the major lakes in New Hampshire. I had a pickup truck and a canoe. We were making the surveys by contacting fishermen on each of the major lakes in New Hampshire to get economic data, and what kind of catch they were enjoying and that kind of thing. It was a very enjoyable experience. We finished that and went right back to southern Illinois and studied for our oral exams. I took my masters "orals" there. On the way back from New Hampshire, however, I stopped in Washington, D. C. and called North Carolina. I had heard that there was a possible vacancy in North Carolina for a Wildlife Biologist. And sure enough the position was still vacant. We drove down there on a Saturday morning and I was interviewed and I got the job contingent upon completing my masters "orals". After the interview, we rushed back to Illinois and finished the "orals" and moved down to North Carolina. In North Carolina, I was a wildlife biologist in the central part of the state. I believed in competing. I don't know how that the competition got into my makeup, but I competed with all of the other biologists. Within three years I was the project leader for the statewide program. We did Bobwhite Quail, and I was also responsible for research work that was going on with deer and trapping and transplanting turkeys. I finally moved to North Carolina's central office in Raleigh, but I wasn't excited about my career. I had been there for ten years, and the Director was kind of grooming me to become a Director. He said, "After I retire, you would be a good Director, stay". And I said, "No, I don't want to be involved in this administrative work, and all this paper work with the major part of my career still in front of me". I started looking for something else, and I learned that there was a Waterfowl Biologist position open in the Fish and Wildlife Service on the east coast. I thought, "Boy, this would be wonderful", because my masters had concerned waterfowl and wetlands management. I filled out a Civil Service application and I didn't score high enough to get the job. I was kind of disappointed. It was the first time I had ever filled out one of those Civil Service applications. I had apparently not put enough data there. In the meantime, I met Larry Givens who was the regional supervisor of refuges, in Atlanta. He was the one who was going to select the person and he would be that person's boss. When he learned that I didn't score high enough he called me and said, "Don, just hang on. I like your background and I want you for the job". He also said, "I'll just not select anyone yet, and in another two or three months you can fill out another Civil Service exam, and try again". Next time, when I filled out the Civil Service application, I put all kinds of details in there. I flew through, and got the job. I resigned from the position in North Carolina, and moved to Savannah, Georgia. I began my Fish and Wildlife career as the east coast biologist in April of 1961.

MR. GROVER: Good grief Don! Here you are, already in there! How did you get into it? What lead you? How did you want to become a wildlife biologist?

MR. HANKLA: Well, it was because I could see hunting and fishing and working with wild animals. I had hunted and fished as a youth. I hunted waterfowl with my Dad, back in the days when you could still use live decoys, believe it or not, to hunt with. I also hunted waterfowl with my grandfather, and my cousins. All through our grade school, and high school years, it was just something that we enjoyed doing. I thought, it would be really great to get a job where I could still work with waterfowl. I was interested in

going with the Fish and Wildlife Service when I learned that this job vacancy would have to do with managing waterfowl on national wildlife refuges.

MR. GROVER: So now, you are now a biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

MR. HANKLA: Yes, and it was the beginning of a fantastic career. A most interesting thing happened just three weeks after I became an employee of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Larry Givens, my new supervisor called down to talk to me on the phone at the office on the Savannah Refuge. Millie and I had just closed the deal on buying a house. We had signed the papers and moved in. Three weeks had passed. And Larry says, "Don, I hate to tell you this, but Congress is considering legislation that would provide a loan on duck stamp funds to the Fish and Wildlife Service to buy a national wildlife refuge. If this Bill passes, we will probably want you to come in to Atlanta and be our regional land acquisition specialist". Here I'd only been with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for three weeks and already I could see a move in the offing. I think it was probably in early May, and sure enough, Congress passed that Bill in October. In November, we were moving to Atlanta!

MR. GROVER: What grade were you hired on at?

MR. HANKLA: I was hired on as a GS-11. This was because of the experience I had with the state I qualified for that. I moved laterally, as I have done many times since then. I became the ascertainment biologist, which was a land acquisition specialist for refuges. I was in that role, for the next four years, from 1962 to 1965.

MR. GROVER: This would be for the ten southeastern states, or twelve?

MR. HANKLA: Twelve. Sometime during that period I think we changed that back to ten. But I was actually looking for refuges up in Maryland and Virginia. So I was in a twelve state area, searching and selecting lands for national wildlife refuge purposes. I took this job to heart and really wanted to do a good job at it. I knew it was important to get them located just right. But somebody tipped me off that I should ask the states how they felt about this program. So one of my first assignments was to meet with the Habitat committees of the Flyway Councils. I met with that committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council, and the Atlantic Flyway Council at their regular meetings. I told them what I was doing and asked them for suggestions on where they thought maybe we should add additional national wildlife refuges. At the same time, I gathered data. I plotted the refuge locations in the Mississippi and Atlantic flyways, and looked for places that Mr. Givens and Rudy Rudolph and I thought might be good locations where there might be a need for additional refuges. Rudy Rudolph was also a biologist in the region. We plotted the locations of state management areas that were suitable for waterfowl, as well as national wildlife refuges.

MR. GROVER: So, you were looking strictly for waterfowl refuge, and waterfowl lands, but not upland?

MR. HANKLA: It had to be waterfowl refuge, and wetlands, because of the fact that we were going to be spending duck stamp money. That had to be used for habitat for waterfowl. The duck stamp funds were earmarked for that purpose. There could be, and were, uplands involved on the refuges because it would be difficult to find a refuge that was all wet. But by and large, they were the typical national wildlife refuges that had wetlands that could be managed to provide improved habitat for waterfowl. For about four years I did that. And I selected ten or eleven major refuges, and a number of refuge additions. This was exciting work. I had heard of Jay Clark Salyer who was the "father of refuges", he was still working for the Service although he was blind, and was no longer the acting chief of refuges in Washington. He was in the office, and still very much interested in land acquisition. He would have read to him all of the biological reports that came in for land acquisition. I had a letter from him. I chose, and the region supported my selection of, a refuge on the Pee Dee River in North Carolina. I chose this place, of course, because of its characteristics, but also there was a remnant goose flock there at Gaddy's Goose Pond. The flock was not really growing and just barely maintaining itself. We thought that if we could found a national wildlife refuge near there, we could probably improve the habitat and protect that little flock. Anyway, Jay Clark Salyer thought the biological report that I did was very adequate, very good. He scratched out a little handwritten letter to me, and signed it "Jay Clark Salyer". It said, "you sure did a good job on this one", or something like that. I have that letter in my file. I was excited! Any time that we had a refuge proposal using duck stamp funds, the proposal, after clearing the Washington office, would have to go before the Migratory Bird Commission, and the NBCC. I was very privileged to go along with those proposals. When the Migratory Bird Commission met I got to go to Washington and meet before that Commission to justify the acquisition. I spoke to that Commission on several occasions, which was an exciting thing to do. Of course Mr. Salyer was there, and he would just speak out and interrupt, if he thought that enough good information was not being presented. He was well known among the people of that Commission. It was a very exciting time. And now as I look back, I am proud to have been personally involved in selecting at least ten of the five hundred and thirty-five refuges that were added to the System, plus a number of additions. I feel really honored.

MR. GROVER: Don, you mentioned that there were a number of refuges that you had directed. What are the names of these refuges?

MR. HANKLA: I was involved, and did most of the selecting of Lake Woodruff and Lower Suwannee in Florida, and the St. Vincent Refuge, also in Florida. There was also the Hatchie over in Tennessee, as well as the Lower Hatchie. The Pee Dee in North Carolina, which was the first one I selected. There was the Eastern Neck up in Maryland. There was Mason's Neck in Virginia, Knott's Island in North Carolina, and Pungo National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina, and Harris Neck in Georgia. Those were wholly new acquisitions, and there were a number of additions: Yazoo at Mathews Brake in Mississippi. I would find these places personally, and confer with Givens, and Royce, and Rudolph and others who were involved, and also with the states.

MR. GROVER: About the additions, these were major additions?

MR. HANKLA: The exciting one that I had was a major addition to Okefenokee. This occurred later, after I had transferred into the Washington office, and got to know Dr. Les Glascoe who was the assistant Secretary of the Interior. He was gung ho on land acquisitions for wildlife refuges. I had known him in the past, and he came to me one time, and said, "Don, you're involved in acquisition, you were involved in that in Region 4 and you are still involved in it. I would like for you to prepare some packages for me, so that I can take one up to Secretary Hickell". Hickell was the Secretary of the Interior at the time. "I would like to lay an acquisition package on his desk every time I go up there, and ask him for money. I know that he keeps a million dollars back, in a special fund, and I'd like to see if I could get that". I called Bill Ashe in Region 4, who was Bob Lyons', assistant at the time. He was really an excellent realty person. I told him what Glascoe wanted, and he said that they had one "all fixed up". And I told them to send it up to Washington. They sent one for a twenty thousand acre addition to Okefenokee. They had pictures, and it was prepared very well. I took it to Director Goschalk and told him that this is what Dr. Glascoe had asked me to get, and it had come in from Region 4. They hastily met with the land acquisition people and they took it over to Glascoe. He marched upstairs to see Hickell, and got the money! We were then able to make that purchase, "bang, bang, bang". It was really slick. Some of those things were really exciting when you could see real quick results, and that was one of those. I think that land acquisition is really exciting anyway because it's here to stay. The refuge system is really great and "they aren't making any more land", as the old timers used to say. We were grabbing up some real good sites for waterfowl management and for wildlife refuges.

MR. GROVER: Were there other refuge packages, or additions that you were involved in?

MR. HANKLA: There were a number of them, but I can't recall the details. The Refuge Manager would look at the lands nearby, and if there were a need for adding additional lands he would prepare a package, or suggest. Then we would go out and look at it together. I would then write up the biological requirements and so forth, and process them through. As I mentioned before, Yazoo was one, along with several others over in the Mississippi Valley were small additions.

MR. GROVER: There were a number of other ones for which you planted the seed, which didn't catch, right then, but would come to life later on.

MR. HANKLA: Yes, there were. You learn some of these lessons the hard way, I guess. But we learned that it is necessary to clear some of these proposals with the public. Some of the states require it with regard to duck stamp funding. The law requires the Governor's approval in the state in which the purchase is going to be made. Sometimes that is just routine, because you work with the state in selecting an area, and you know that the Governor is going to approve it. I worked on a beautiful proposal for Mobile Bay; it was going to be a real fine refuge. I think that there is one there now, years later. It was just really nice. But before Governor George Wallace would approve it, he said he

wanted us to have a public meeting. John Finley was the assistant director for wildlife in Region 4 at the time. He then went on to be the director of Region 1. John and I went down to Mobile Bay and had a public meeting. As it happens, I didn't know that I should be sparing with the truth. One of the old refuge managers used to tell me, "Don't tell lies, but sometimes be sparing with the truth". At the public meeting I was asked some questions. And one of the questions was, "What are you going to do about those houseboats out there on the river that are coming into Mobile Bay?" I blurted out, "Well, they'll have to go. Houseboats would be incompatible with a wildlife refuge". As it turned out, that wasn't the thing to say. I should have said something like, "Well, we'll have to give careful consideration to those". Well, the owners of the houseboats got together and went to the Governor, and he would not approve that proposal because of the fact that I said that the houseboats would "have to go". I learned to be a little more careful the next time about answering and being really truthful about some things that were said. That one, I think the Service got later. I think there is a refuge there now. There was another one, in North Carolina that didn't go well at all. We had a public hearing and the landowner's didn't want to see their land condemned. We had promised that we would not condemn their land, even though we did have condemnation authority. Our principal all through the years was to buy from willing sellers. As far as I know that is the Fish and Wildlife Service's policy now. However, they do have the authority, if they have to use it, to condemn out, for one reason or another a property. If it is in the public's interest to do so, of course. In North Carolina, they would not accept the fact that we would just buy from willing sellers one this one particular property I forget now, where it was. They knew that we had the authority, and were afraid that it would be used, so the proposal was never approved. In South Carolina something real unusual happened. I chose a beautiful plantation that had been managed for waterfowl for years, down on the Cumbee River. As I recall, Christian Herder who was well known owned the plantation. I think he had been the Secretary of State in some administration. He learned, after the fact that I had been looking at his property, and was interested in it, and was going to make a proposal that it become a national wildlife refuge, and had not touched base with him. He went to the South Carolina Legislature and the South Carolina Legislature passed a resolution prohibiting the Fish and Wildlife Service from buying any land in that area. So that shot me down, and I had really done a bang-up job on writing that one up. It was a beauty. But it didn't work out.

MR. GROVER: For the record, what was your position title at this time? And what grade were you?

MR. HANKLA: I was still a GS-11.

MR. GROVER: You mean there was a GS-11 directing all of these major things for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

MR. HANKLA: I wouldn't say "directing". I was responsible for doing the selecting and writing up the proposals. I also coordinated with the realty department, in this instance with Bob Lyons and Bill Ashe. I also had to make the presentations before the Regional Land Acquisitions Committee, and Washington. It was just good training. I didn't know that there was a possibility for a "12" there so I worked as an "11". Larry

Givens, my supervisor, could and did look down the road to see what was going to happen to my career. I wanted to go to the departmental training program. I think about that time, I applied for that program. I received my GS-12, and did go to the departmental training program in 1965. I think it was called the "Departmental Manager Training Program".

MR. GROVER: Yeah, "DMTP".

MR. HANKLA: We called it "charm school". I got to go to "charm school" for six months or so. That was a very exciting experience. But that was at the culmination of land acquisition. As I mentioned a while ago about competing: I liked to compete. And we in the region wanted to compete for as much of that one hundred and five million dollar program. All of the regions had a part of that. And we in Region 4 spent about thirty-five million of it. We really got out and tried. Our largest competitor was Region 3 where they were spending money to buy potholes, which was very valuable, of course.

MR. GROVER: And you were a Wildlife Biologist? Was that your title as you served in the position of ascertainment biologist?

MR. HANKLA: I think the official description was "land ascertainment specialist" or something like that.

MR. GROVER: Was that an "ES-486" series?

MR. HANKLA: Yes, a "486" series Wildlife Biologist.

MR. GROVER: What year are we talking about now?

MR. HANKLA: This is 1961 when I started, until 1965 when I went in to Washington. Somewhere along there, I guess, I got a "12". Then the land acquisition was over largely, and I became an assistant supervisor. Larry Givens reorganized the region and made me an assistant supervisor of five states, Louisiana, Arkansas, and so forth.

MR. GROVER: Don, you had one final story on your career?

MR. HANKLA: I found in my career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, that special assignments sometimes brought with them a great deal of fun, and excitement. I was assigned sometime in 1963 or 1964 while I was in land acquisition work, to a special Department of the Interior team that was working under the direction of President Johnson himself, and Lady Bird, his wife. She wanted to beautify Washington. He wanted to do something for the entire area, to see if it could be improved, and more concern given to conservation. I was assigned from Region 4 to represent the Fish and Wildlife Service on that team. It was my job, for about three months to look at every piece of public owned land on the Potomac River, all the way from Camp David to the mouth of the river, in detail. I had to look at everything. Whether it was public or private, I had to look at it, and decided whether it might play a role someplace, either

with the Fish and Wildlife Service or as a National Park. I spent the whole summer there, away from home. I got to go home about every three weeks to see my wife and kids. Then I had to go back to Washington and live in a hotel in downtown "D.C.," and work on this assignment. What came out of it was something very valuable. I learned a lot personally, about the Potomac River and the history of George Washington and all of his "runnings" there. But we ended up by getting Mason's Neck as a National Wildlife Refuge. It had been suggested before, but it is down there at the mouth of the Potomac really. And so Mason's Neck was picked up because of its value to Bald Eagles. It had a couple of Eagle nests there. That came out of that particular assignment, and I was real pleased that we were able to add Mason's Neck to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

MR. GROVER: It was at about this time, then, that you went up to Washington, D.C. for the Departmental Manager Development training program? What year was that?

MR. HANKLA: I think it was 1965. It was a six-month program. I went up in September and didn't get back until about March. I got involved in some things up there. It was very exciting to me, to be involved in that training program. I thought it was well organized. I had a lot of fun, and got to know a lot about the department. Then, when I went back to Atlanta, I became an assistant regional supervisor in the western part of the southeast region.

MR. GROVER: In that departmental training program, let's step back for a moment, did you have any notable assignments? Did you work on "the Hill" at all, or up in the Secretary's office?

MR. HANKLA: I don't recall anything special, except that I took some courses. I took one course on natural resource management, which was taught by Senator Muskie. Muskie was a notable person who was interested in environmental issues. He did a real good job. I remember that. Of course, I was over on "the Hill" a lot listening to committees and that kind of thing. But at that time, I don't recall any particular assignment. At that time the Secretary of the Interior was Stuart Udall. I actually got into his office, and saw him at work. He didn't work with his coat on. He took his coat off and rolled up his shirtsleeves. He had a big table in front of him. He actually was working there and not just talking. I had a lot of respect for him at that particular time. A little later, I almost lost my respect for him, when I got back to the region, for something that I didn't understand. But that is a different story. The experience, for me, was great to be up there.

MR. GROVER: That returned you to Atlanta with Larry Givens? And you were an assistant regional supervisor?

MR. HANKLA: I was an assistant regional supervisor of refuges for the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee. It required me to do a lot of traveling. I enjoyed that very much. I was working with some of the best refuge managers that I ever knew. But my kids were growing up. I would be out all week, and I would come home on weekends. And if something wasn't going right, why, my kids would hear from

me. They kind of pictured me as a tyrant coming in and giving out discipline on the weekends, and then back to the field again I'd go, to inspect another refuge. When I was up in Washington, in the Departmental Training Program, I was invited to stay. It would be a promotion working in the office of Bob Balou, dealing with biological aspects. One day, after about three years passed, I was fed up with the travel although I enjoyed it very much. I came in one weekend and the kids were almost strangers to me, it seemed like. I got on the phone on Monday. "Would that job still be open in Washington?" And they said, "It sure is". And I said, "Send me the paperwork, I want to take on that job". Before I took it though, I asked how much traveling I would have to do out of Washington. I was interested in being with my kids. They said, "You'll be lucky if you get out of here once a year". And I said, "That's good enough for me"! So off to Washington I went.

MR. GROVER: Did you get a promotion out of it?

MR. HANKLA: I got a promotion. I got to a "13" finally up there. I wasn't there long in that slot, with Bob Balou. The position of Chief of Natural Resources soon came open, and I was selected for that. So I got a "14" real quick, after being a "13". But then I stayed a "14" forever. That's another story, but I really enjoyed the Washington office assignment. I got to do some things that were really special.

MR. GROVER: Don, let's talk some about the time you spent in the Washington office, and what you were doing.

MR. HANKLA: I was in a branch of "Resources" for the most part, after about six months or so, maybe a year. We were dealing with fishing and hunting plans, and acquiring land, and those kinds of things that dealt with the actual management of the resources on the refuges. At that time, Congress was giving consideration to the Endangered Species Act, and the Wilderness Act. The Wilderness Act passed. After a couple of years in the branch of resources, that responsibility for implementing the Wilderness Act on wildlife refuges came into the branch of resources. It was kind of exciting to deal with that. It was something new and we weren't sure how it was going to affect the National Wildlife Refuge System. We had to get guidelines out to the refuges. To do that, at that time, I realized that the staff I had was already busy with everything that they could do. We needed more people. I got permission to bring in two more people to deal with this particular aspect of "Wilderness" because it required identifying possible wilderness areas on national wildlife refuges, and then holding public hearings. I was fortunate in finding that Jim Gillette, from Region 3, and Earl Cunningham from Region 4 would come in and deal with that. The two of them came in and were on the staff of the resource branch. They dealt with that entirely. And they implemented the Wilderness Act. I thought that was pretty exciting. And it was very worthwhile. One of the things that happened to me during this time, was that assistant Secretary Reed was interested in trying to do something to prevent the wholesale use of "10-80", a real vital poison, to control animals. The Fish and Wildlife Service was using it for this purpose. It was used particularly for controlling coyotes out west. We felt like that this should not be, and that there should be some more careful control made of it. To make a long story

short, I was involved in writing an executive order. I represented the Fish and Wildlife Service, and there was also a representative of the Department of Agriculture. There was also the forerunner of the Environmental Protection Agency involved. I can't think of the name of that organization was, but it was at the Cabinet level. They hadn't yet come along with the EPA. The three groups got together in the Executive Office Building, next to the White House, on a Saturday morning after writing back and forth and talking to one another. We wrote an executive order that President Nixon signed which prohibited the use of "10-80" on public lands. And that was a big thing, because as you know in the west, a large part of the landscape is public lands. The ranchers and farmers, and people who were leasing those areas for cattle and sheep were somehow getting to use "10-80". And "10-80" was a poison that had secondary effects. You could not only kill a coyote, but then you might kill a golden eagle that had eaten the coyote, and right on down the chain. I was very pleased to be involved in the writing of that executive order. The fact that Nixon signed it was a plus. As far as I know it still stands. I don't think that you can use "10-80" on any public land, for any kind of purpose. That was kind of a "bonus" assignment that was exciting for me to be involved in. Shortly thereafter I was assigned to the Assistant Secretary's office, and I spent six months up there working for Secretary Reed. I was involved in a number of issues. They pulled me out of the Division of Refuges, and did not fill the position behind me. I think they were glad when I got out of Washington, finally, because they could put that position back in Refuges again. At that time, the Service was giving consideration to associate regional director positions. Those positions, presumably, were going to be used for training people. I was given a choice; frankly, they were setting up one of those in each region. Spencer Smith, the Director at the time came to me and said, "You have your choice, Don. You've done your thing in here, and we appreciate your work and you take your choice". I had never been west of St. Louis, so I chose to go to Portland. I wanted to see what the west was like. And John Finley, who I had worked with in Atlanta, was there. I thought that I would like to work with him. I decided that I'd like to go to Portland and John Finley agreed, so I went out there as the associate regional director as my next tour.

MR. GROVER: Don, let's talk about your time in, and your move to Portland. What year would that have been?

MR. HANKLA: This was, I believe, in July of 1973. Well no, I have to back up a little bit. It was in July of 1972. I was out there for four and a half years. Millie and I, and the children moved out there. I found the work to be exciting. I had no idea what an associate regional director would do. I'm not sure that it had even been decided what they would do, when they were selected. They simply wanted to add that position to the administrative staff of every region.

MR. GROVER: What was the purpose of the position?

MR. HANKLA: The purpose was for training.

MR. GROVER: What would they be training for?

MR. HANKLA: We didn't know what we were going to be trained for. It could have been training to go back to Washington as a division chief. It could also have been training for a deputy regional director, or some other assignment of equal importance. As it turned out, when I was there the regional director retired, and the deputy regional director retired. I found myself, after three years or so, acting as deputy regional director with no regional director. I did this for over six months. I was making decisions that I felt were the right ones to make. It was exciting, but I had a lot of responsibility that I had never had before. It was a new world for me, because I had been in the Midwest and the southeast and was not familiar with the region. It helped to round out my total experience. I really believe that a person can gain by seeing how things are done in other parts of the country. I always believed that cross-regional experience could be, and was very valuable. After having worked in Washington, and in Region 4, I felt that being able to go to Region 1 was a lot of fun. I got to do a lot of things that I probably would not have done otherwise. Dr. Perry didn't like to travel, as a deputy. And John Finley didn't like to travel, because he was nearing retirement. I seemed to be doing a lot of traveling, representing the regional director. I don't know how many trips I made to Hawaii. I made numerous trips to California, where I dealt with Ray Arnette, the director there, who later became assistant secretary. I got to know the directors of all of the states. Then when Kaylor Martinson came in as regional director, and Bill Martin as deputy, I had a good time with them. We were old friends.

MR. GROVER: Did you mean to say Bill Meyer?

MR. HANKLA: Yes, Bill Meyer. Thank you. That was a very good relationship. I was ready to move after four and one half years, and as it happened, the Fish and Wildlife Service changed its organization one more time. It seemed to do that frequently, and set up area offices. I applied for two different area offices. I was fortunate to receive an appointment to one in Jacksonville, Florida. That required a major move, and we had to sell our home. But we weathered that pretty well. I might say, here at this point, that with the Fish and Wildlife Service, if you go with the organization, and move as often as you have the chance to in order to enhance your career, it requires the support of your wife and family. If you're lucky enough to have a supportive wife, these moves can be very good. My wife was supportive all the way, and we felt that it enhanced the education of our children to learn about the various parts of the country. We moved a lot during my career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and with the state of North Carolina before then. Our kids have really moved around a lot. If, on the other hand, you and your wife don't feel that moving around a lot in order to enhance your career is desirable, then you might have second thoughts about coming into the Fish and Wildlife Service. Nevertheless, we moved to Jacksonville, Florida and established an area office.

MR. GROVER: Don, let's go to the next chapter, which would be your experiences in the area office in Jacksonville, Florida.

MR. HANKLA: Well, the area office concept was new to the Fish and Wildlife Service. I'm not sure that any of us knew exactly what was going to happen to us. But we were excited about the prospects. A lot of responsibility was transferred from the regional

directors to the area managers. What happened was, that they had divided the country up. It already had six major regions, and they ended up with eighteen areas. There were three areas in Region 4, and was the area manager in Jacksonville for the states of Georgia, and Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. With the help of the regional office, it was my responsibility to select a staff for the work there, and set up the office. As it worked out, I had an excellent staff, and an excellent administrative assistant in the office. I was fortunate to get Margaret Dixon, who had at one time been a clerk at Okefenokee Refuge, nearby. She had gone to Washington, and had worked for Russ Fielding in the Office of Legislative Affairs. She knew her way around quite well, and was an expert administrator. She wanted to come back south, so she became our administrative officer, so to speak, or the administrative assistant. Almost anybody can be successful if they have a real good administrative assistant, like Peggy Dixon. She was just excellent. We were also fortunate in attracting many other good people for our staff.

I was very selective, and was lucky enough to get Larry Goldman. The first time I met him, he was in the Olympia office of Ecological Services. He had gone to Washington in a training program and he had been on a special assignment to the state of Mississippi. He was an expert in his field. We were lucky to get him as a staff person, in Ecological Services. Lynn Childers was his assistant. I think Lynn is now at Olympia. We got Jerry Grover, who had wide experience, and been to the departmental manager training program. He also knew quite well Ray Vaughn, who was the deputy, regional director. Ray suggested that I might try to lure Jerry to the office. He and his wife came, and stayed the full time that we were in business there. They lived nearby, and we became good friends. He did a fine job in the Fisheries area. With regard to area office and all the areas of responsibility, I found that I didn't have the experience and background to deal with each discipline. So it was incumbent on me, I felt, to find the best people possible who I could get, to handle this for me. I got Jerry Grover, who was an excellent and expert Fisheries person, Larry Goldman for Ecological Services, and John Overhoight had wide experience with state and federal refuges. Dave Peterson came over and dealt with endangered species. He was an expert, and knew Florida quite well.

MR. GROVER: There was Sam Drake.

MR. HANKLA: Yes, that's right. Sam Drake had a lot experience on several refuges as John Overhoight's assistant. I found that it was desirable to get these good people. And at the same time, it was desirable to give them the responsibility to do the job. I delegated all of the responsibility that I could to them, to the point where they were acting, assistant area managers for their particular discipline. That freed me to do other administrative things. It freed me to work with the states, and to do planning and keep up with what was going on. I felt that in concept, and in practice it worked well in our area. I felt that we had probably the best area in the country. We were all disappointed when the area manager concept was changed in 1982. During that period from 1976 to 1982, I felt that we were doing something new in the Fish and Wildlife Service that was very good for the resource. That's really the bottom line. Do the best job that you can to work with the states, and other conservation groups in a partnership to deal with the natural resources. In particular, our responsibilities were always migratory species, and endangered species, and certain fishery species.

MR. GROVER: Wasn't the philosophy of the area office to be a nucleus of people that could interact directly with the state counterparts and the constituent groups? Weren't there just six or seven people with support from the regional office?

MR. HANKLA: That was the concept. We had good support from the regional office and it worked that way. I think that the states that we dealt with liked the concept because they saw more of us, and we could talk directly to them. We could relate to them and their problems more directly, I think, than they had had the experience of doing in the past. I felt that it was an excellent concept.

MR. GROVER: What were some of the big issues that pushed your button as area manager? I know that there was the cross-state barge canal, the Florida airport, and endangered species. You had the submarine base up in southern Georgia, and Puerto Rico was always ignored.

MR. HANKLA: That was one button that was pushed with regard to the area. The Service had not intended to do so, but as far as I was concerned, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands had pretty well been ignored. I simply felt that the potential, and problems and the federal responsibilities had not been recognized down there. We did have a game agent there, and there was an Ecological Services office there that had limited responsibility. There were at least two small National Wildlife Refuges down there, small ones. I felt that it was desirable to add staff to the total compliment of Fish and Wildlife people in Puerto Rico, and recognize the responsibilities that we had there. We had endangered species, and migratory bird work to do. Ecological Services also expanded their work there. As a result, what this meant was, we didn't get any more dollars, or any more people, we had to reallocate what we had in the area for that purpose. I reallocated rather freely, additional positions and money down there. Of course, we were able to budget for that later on. I felt that this was one of the major things that we did: to recognize the additional responsibilities that we had that had been ignored before. Dealing with the endangered species in Florida, the Manatee, and other endangered species was very important. These kinds of things had kind of fallen between the cracks in the past, and nobody knew how to deal with the Manatee. The Marine Mammal Commission was really interested in the Fish and Wildlife Service doing more for the Manatee in the state of Florida. So we heard from them, and got support from them in the end. Just developing and maintaining good state relations with conservation groups and state resource agencies was important. Of course, in Jacksonville, we were located very close to the Corps of Engineers. We had a lot of resource responsibilities, so it was handy to deal with them, and I think we did so successfully.

MR. GROVER: There were a lot of endangered species down there, Don. You had everything from the Dusky Seaside Sparrow, and the Everglades Kite.

MR. HANKLA: Yes, and in those days, emphasis was being given to endangered species, but we really weren't staffed up for it. Jim Baker, on the refuge staff at Merritt Island, had been assigned to deal with the Dusky Seaside Sparrow. He was alerting us

that the population was declining. We would alert the regional office in Washington, but nothing seemed to happen. All of a sudden the level of the Dusky Seaside Sparrow got down to the point, well, it actually became extinct right there in front of us. They found that there were six left and they tried to trap them. I think the last two were transported in a cage to Disney World and they died there. That's one of those situations where I think that scientists had not yet dealt with what happens when a species gets down to a certain point where they are no longer a biologically viable population. That population may have been already below that point when Jim started to work on it.

MR. GROVER: There was the problem of habitat loss due to human development down there around Merritt Island.

MR. HANKLA: Exactly. We worked a lot with the Manatee trying to deal with that. And we are still dealing with that. But we had some things happen that were unfortunate. First of all, some people drowned on Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, in Mosquito Lagoon going waterfowl hunting one morning. We had to deal with that issue and make sure that all the hunters in the future had the right kind of equipment. I have forgotten now, all of the regulations that we had to impose. But then, we had two or three people burn to death in fires. We were doing prescribed burning. They called it "controlled" burning. The prescribed burning is something that is desirable from the standpoint of managing the ecology of an area. You can affect the plant succession, and set it back. And it is good for wildlife. It has to be done with great preciseness and with very carefully. Sometimes the wind will shift and you are in trouble, this happened at Merritt Island. We lost two staff people. We also lost one person at Okefenokee within four years. It was devastating to us. These people were on the staff and for anybody to die, whether they are on your staff or not, is terrible. But we had to deal with this, and it was a very difficult thing.

MR. GROVER: Don, continuing on with Jacksonville: There's a story that I have heard from the outside. Heaven forbid that I would ever start anything like this, but the story goes that you were given an unlimited budget, and you then promptly overspent it. You were confined to a staff of seven to run an area office, but suddenly you end up with about fifteen folks. How did that come about?

MR. HANKLA: We did have somebody come out of Washington I think his name was Dick Myshack to investigate what was going on in the area office. We were given additional responsibilities that were not expected to happen in an area office. First we had the YACC program added to us, and we had Ben Kiehoe and Terry Cromer on staff to deal with just YACC. This was a huge job in itself. We had endangered species responsibilities also. Dave Peterson was involved with the red wolf, and he eventually moved into our office. We had Dr. Jim Baker who had been dealing with the Dusky Seaside Sparrow at Merritt Island, when he was the staff biologist there. He came to the area office as the Manatee Coordinator for the state of Florida. His wife, Dr. Gayle Baker, she came on board to the staff working with land acquisition and endangered plants. She was an expert botanist, so we had two Dr. Bakers on the staff. Wendell Medson we had as a biologist in the office. He did a lot of photography work and was

outstanding. We had Bill Learned there who was a flyway biologist at the Migratory Bird office, which decided to locate him there in the winter. In the summer of course he'd be up in Canada, flying transects. All of this resulted not just in a money problem. It developed into a space problem. We started in the basement of the Post Office where only three or four of us were located when we started in 1976. We found an old used car building, where they had displayed cars. It had large glass windows, and was right next to a railroad track. That provided plenty of noise, and the space was not near large enough. We actually had in one office, desks stacked on top of desks. It was very cramped. We finally got additional space, and all these people: it wasn't supposed to happen that way but there was jobs for them, and it was legitimate. We didn't really overspend in fact we prided ourselves in managing our money so very carefully. Some of our friends in other areas didn't do that so well and we had to bale them out for two or three years in a row. We would be allocating out our money so that it would go out and maybe even do a few extra things and a couple of times the regional office rewarded bad management I think, and took some of our funds from us to bale people out in other areas. That was kind of vexing at the time. But the total experience at the area office was tremendous. It all ended about the first of July in 1982. I went back to Atlanta and Jerry went to Portland. I'm not sure where everybody else went at the moment. But Larry Goldman became the supervisor of ecological services over in Alabama. Nobody lost his or her job. They were apportioned out and were taken care of. We regretted the decision made by the "powers that be" in Washington to disband the area management concept and go back to the old way of doing business. I personally went back to Atlanta. I could have probably stayed in the area office because it was going to continue to be an office with reduced responsibility. But I preferred, and there was a threat there that I would loose my grade, and I was too close to retirement to want to do that. So I retreated back to Atlanta, where I had been. Fortunately I already owned a home in Atlanta from my first assignment there. In Atlanta I started doing other things. I had, I guess, three different assignments in Wildlife, and Ecological Services, in and out, over a period of five years. It was not the most exciting task, after being a project manager where you allocate resources to do work, and where you have supervisory responsibility and the Responsibility for allocating dollars, and getting work done. Suddenly when you find yourself back as a deputy to someone, or in a program, you've lost responsibility and you have to change gears real fast and kind of reset your modus operandi, so to speak to accommodate that. And this is very difficult for most people to go from one discipline to another where you are an assistant to someone with not a lot to do.

MR. GROVER: So with your movement to Atlanta in 1982, when did you retire after then?

MR. HANKLA: I retired in 1987. I work in Ecological Services as the assistant to the assistant director for Ecological Services. I worked in Wildlife a couple of times, and I had other responsibilities from time to time. I guess it was a good way to wind down your Service experience, but it was the least exciting of my entire entire career with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Looking back on my career in total really excited me. It was great. I recommend it for anyone. I got to do things in the field. I helped to acquire lands that were going to be permanently in the National Wildlife Refuge System, which

is a global network of lands that are very important to wildlife and resources. I got to do other things that were important. I think I made a contribution, and in terms of the refuge concept, I understood it better, and I understand it better all of the time. The refuges and each flyway are a system of stepping-stones for use by critters that migrate. It could be migration habitat, or it could be wintering habitat. Each of those habitats fill a number of important roles and to fill out that system ecologically, on an ecosystem basis, is very exciting. And it has been a very worthwhile experience for me.

MR. GROVER: Don, you retired in 1987 from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Does that mean you stopped doing the things that you were doing?

MR. HANKLA: Oh, not at all! I've become more involved in doing the things I was doing. My retirement has become very exciting. I moved back to southern Illinois and purchased my family farm and my wife's family farm. I also purchased another farm, so I have three farms. I immediately went to the NRCS office, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, what many of you know as the SCS. As it turned out, there was a need for a natural resources plan in a watershed called the Cash Watershed in southern Illinois. In the Cash Watershed, there is the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, which was just established in 1990. It is just beginning to get started, so they invited me to become a member of the planning committee for the watershed. Soon after being appointed to the planning committee; there were five people appointed from five counties, so there were twenty-five of us. I was elected Chairman of the planning committee. The committee actually operated over a two-year period, meeting once a month. We developed a resource plan. I provided leadership to that committee based upon the fact that I had had training in planning and working with resources with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The plan was completed in 1995. The Fish and Wildlife Service was involved, and well as was the Forest Service, as were the NRCS, and the state Fish and Games departments. It was found that there was a need for a "not for profit" organization to kind of keep all of there agencies together and be an advocate for funding, and an advocate for doing things. So I formed a "not for profit" organization called "The Friends of the Cash".